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ABSTRACT

This report outlines actions taken by the Utah State Office of Education to ensure that educational objectives of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act are accomplished. The report is prefaced by a request for proposals and is comprised of five parts. The first part presents definitions related to Section VII (B) of the McKinney Act. The second part describes the following educational barriers for Utah's homeless students: (1) lack of awareness of the presence of homeless children and youth; (2) lack of coordination; (3) lack of educational programs addressing the needs of homeless children and youth; (4) lack of transportation; (5) residency; and (6) student records. The third part presents the federal mandate, the objectives, and the activities designed to remove each of the barriers described in the second part. The fourth part outlines a schedule for the accomplishment of 13 deliverable goals. The fifth part suggests evaluation criteria pertaining to the elimination of each barrier to homeless education during the first year of plan implementation. The sixth part comprises the following appendixes: (1) a summary of data from the 1987-88 final report; (2) a point-in-time survey of homeless children and youth; and (3) two tables listing data sources and services for at-risk students. (AF)

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UTAH STATE PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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UTAH STATE PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

OFFICE OF UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

JAY B. TAGGART

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

STRATEGIC INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

Bruce R. Griffin
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Kenneth L. Hennefer, Specialist
Project Coordinator
Special Needs Populations

Marilyn Treshow
Project Consultant
Teacher, Homeless Children and Youth

Coordinator's Office of the Education
of Homeless Children and Youth
Department of Education Services
For At Risk Students

Salt Lake City, Utah

REVISED
OCTOBER, 1990

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FOREWORD

Programs directed toward the education of homeless children, youth, and adults have been initiated through the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, now known as P.L.100-77. This is the first comprehensive law addressing the problems of homelessness in the United States.

The primary goal of the McKinney Act, Section VII (B) is to implement the policy of Congress that homeless children have access to free, appropriate public education on an equal basis with other children. Grants to states are authorized to obtain information on the number and needs of homeless children and youth that will enable identification of any problems that prevent these students from receiving an education and to develop plans to overcome such problems.

The Utah State Office of Education serves as the Coordinating Agency to implement programs for the education of the homeless children and youth in Utah. The State Office, as outlined in the State Plan, will identify the needs, recommend the appropriate policies, provide data to the federal government, work with local school districts throughout the state, and work with related agencies and homeless families in order to ensure that educational objectives of the McKinney Act are effectively implemented.

As enumerated in this State Plan the goals of the program are first to break down existing barriers to educating homeless children and youth. This will be accomplished through developing an awareness of the situation by conferring with local school districts and educators, associated agencies, and meeting with parents of these children and youth.

The State Plan also will provide policies that will bring the state into compliance with the law and outline the specific local, regional, and statewide activities employed to assure homeless students have the same access to quality education as do other students.

Jay B. Taggart
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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Particular credit for suggestions is also give to:

MERLE E. ALLEN
Chairman of Weber County Homeless Coordinating Council
MAUN ALSTON
Assistant Director of Office of Community Operations
STACY BESS
Teacher, Salt Lake Family Shelter
JEFF and BRIDGETTE BINGHAM -
Parents, Community Organizers
GABRIEL DELLA-PIANA
Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Utah
MYLA DUTTON
Office of Community Operations, Utah County
IRENE FISHER
Director of Lowell Bennion Center, University of Utah
DONNA GEBLER
Director, Salt Lake Family Shelter
MAXINE GREER
Social Worker, Salt Lake Family Shelter
STEVE HOLBROOK
Chairperson, Shelter the Homeless Committee
JACK KEEGAN
Assistant Superintendent, Salt Lake City School District
MONA KNAPP
Director, Marillac House
STEVAN J. KUKIC
Coordinator, Students At Risk Section (SARS), Utah State Office of Education
FATHER KUZI
St. George Catholic Church
RONALD LAMB
At Risk Coordinator
JERALD MERRILL
Executive Director, Hospitality Ministry
PATRICK POULIN
Administrator, Salt Lake Family Shelter
JEANNINE ROEDERER
St. Joseph's Outreach, Ogden
RICHARD ROPERS
Professor of Sociology, Southern Utah State College
A. WALLY SANDACK
Attorney
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
FOREWORD		iii
ACKNOWEDGEMENTS		iv
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS		vi
I.	DEFINITIONS RELATED TO SECTION VII (B) OF THE STEWART B. MCKINNEY ACT	1
II.	EDUCATION BARRIERS FOR UTAH'S HOMELESS STUDENTS	2
III.	GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR UTAH'S HOMELESS STUDENTS	3
IV.	EVALUATION	12
V.	APPENDIX A: Summary of data from the Final Report 1987 - 1988	13
	APPENDIX B: ABSTRACT	20

It is anticipated that funding for summer projects will be available during 1991. As information becomes available it will be forwarded to local districts. The following model for requests will be utilized.

REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

The Coordinators Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth will fund one or more demonstration projects in local school districts in order to target successful practices of school district/community agency coordination.

Responses should be submitted to:

Dr. Kenneth L. Hennefer
Project Coordinator
Education of Homeless Children and Youth
Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
(801) 538-7727

Proposals will be accepted until 4:00 p.m., Friday May 31, 1991. Questions about the proposal should be directed to Kenneth L. Hennefer (801) 538-7727 or Marilyn Treshow (801) 538-0840.

PROPOSAL CRITERIA

1. Proposals should include a coordinated service delivery model which demonstrates an effort on the part of local school districts to establish networks between themselves and other community agencies serving homeless or near homeless families and youth in their areas. These agencies include local shelters, church groups, and social service agencies.

   Networking between school districts and other agencies is crucial as many of the problems of educating homeless children and youth relate directly to concerns such as adequate food and medical care which are the domain of social service agencies.

   Proposals should show how ongoing outreach to, and communication with, agencies which serve homeless children and youth will be maintained.

   Points of contact in the community should be targeted.

   Contact persons within the school district, shelter or social service agency should be identified.

2. Year-round plans or other schedules which may result in providing services to the maximum number of students should be considered.

3. After school programs emphasizing involvement with community groups which result in homeless students access to resources such as libraries, museums, and recreational facilities will be conisdered.

4. Models should incorporate a plan to utilize volunteers in the program.

5. Both on-site program or programs which seek to integrate students into the regular school will be considered.

   On-site programs should demonstrate efforts to transition and mainstream students wherever practical. Sensitivity to the problems inherent or "institutionalizing" the condition of homelessness should be evident. Networking with social service agencies and the regular school must be demonstrated in all on-site programs. On-site programs must demonstrate that all students receive the guarantees of the McKinney Act including Special Education, Compensatory Programs, Programs for the Gifted and Talented, Vocational Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and school meals.

SECTION I.

DEFINITIONS RELATED TO SECTION VII(B) OF THE STEWART B. MCKINNEY ACT

1. **FREE, APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION** means the educational programs and services that are provided the children of a resident of the state and that are consistent with state school attendance laws. It includes educational services for which the child meets the eligibility criteria, such as compensatory education programs for disadvantaged students, educational programs for the handicapped, and for students with limited English proficiency; programs in vocational education; programs for gifted and talented; and school meals programs.

2. **CHILD or YOUTH** - any person, who were he or she the child of residents of the state, would be entitled to a free, public education. Furthermore, "youth" will identify school aged children who are old enough for enrollment in middle/junior high school and above.

3. **HOMELESS** - an individual who:

    a. Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate residence, or
    b. Has primary nighttime residence in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, conjugate shelters, spouse abuse centers), or
    c. Sleeps in a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, or
    d. Is out of necessity living with relatives or friends due to lack of housing, or runaway children (under 18 years of age) and children and youth who have been abandoned or forced out of home by parents or other caretakers or such youth (between 18 and 21 years of age) who may still be eligible for educational services who -
        i. temporarily reside in shelters awaiting assistance from Social Service agencies.
        ii. live alone on the street or move from place to place between family members, friends, and acquaintances.
    e. Children of migrant families who lack adequate housing. (Housing which includes heat, electricity, running water, etc.)

SECTION II

EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS FOR UTAH'S HOMELESS STUDENTS

Educational barriers exist that impede implementation of homeless education programs. First among these is the general lack of awareness of the problems by local school districts. Lack of coordination among the involved agencies is also a barrier. A lack of programs addressing needs of the homeless and transportation difficulties provide further barriers to an equitable education for homeless children and youth.

BARRIER ONE - Lack of Awareness of the Presence of Homeless Children and Youth

Local school district personnel as well as the general public lack information regarding homeless children and youth. The phenomena of homeless families is not generally recognized in Utah. Educators need more information about the numbers of homeless children and youth within their boundaries, how the condition of homelessness impacts the student's ability to learn, and strategies to encourage school participation on the part of homeless children and youth.

BARRIER TWO - Lack of Coordination

There is little coordination between local school districts and shelter and/or social service providers. This lack of communication and coordination of services results in an inability to track homeless students and ultimately leaves many homeless children and youth without educational services.

BARRIER THREE - Lack of Educational Programs Addressing the Needs of Homeless Children and Youth

When parents are unable to provide the basic necessities of food and shelter for their children, schooling becomes a secondary consideration. As a result, absenteeism is frequent and many children move from one school to another within a few months. This in turn results in students not receiving basic or additional special educational services for which they may qualify.

BARRIER FOUR - Lack of Transportation

Children and youth are often sheltered in areas lacking easy access to public transportation or local school bus service. Homeless children and youth may be hesitant to accept school bus service because of peer rejection based on conditions of homelessness.

BARRIER FIVE - Residency

The issue of residency may become a problem in enrolling a student in local schools.

BARRIER SIX - Student Records

Districts may hesitate to enroll homeless children and youth in school due to lack of records or unavailability of student records.

SECTION III

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: It is the goal of the Utah State Coordinator's Office to ensure that each homeless student have access to a free and appropriate public education on an equal basis with all other students in the state. In order to remove the barriers described in Section II, the following specific objectives are proposed.

BARRIER ONE - Lack of Awareness

Federal Mandate: "The Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Youth will annually gather data on the number and location of homeless children and youth in the state, and such data gathering shall include the nature and extent of problems of access to and placement of homeless children and youth in elementary and secondary schools and the difficulties in identifying the special needs of such children."

McKinney Act, Subtitle B, Section 722

Objective One: Continue to gather data regarding number and location of homeless children and youth and barriers to educational access.

- Continue Point In Time Surveys targeting two days per year for count.
- Continue collecting yearly data regarding homeless children and youth.

Objective Two: To disseminate information regarding the number and location of homeless children and youth and the problems involved in providing educational services to these students.

Activities

- Conduct in-service classes for local districts.
  - Sensitize teachers and administration to the needs of homeless children and youth.
  - Inform educators within local districts as to the presence of homeless children and youth - inform educators of guarantees of educational services provided by the McKinney Act.

- Inform local school personnel involved in student registration procedures of the provisions and intent of the Stewart B. McKinney Act. Ensure that students are not prevented from registering due to lack of school records, withdrawal notices, or immunizations.

- Print brochures for distribution to educators, providers, and advocates, which will focus on issues of homelessness such as numbers, locations, nutritional needs, health care needs, and importance of early intervention.

- Establish a statewide contact number as a source of answers to questions and concerns about homeless children and youth.

- Develop a public service announcement from the Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for local radio stations regarding homeless students' rights to an education.

- Distribute fact sheets on local agencies to educators.

- Distribute list of school district contacts to local agency providers.

- Develop a plan for statewide conference on homeless children and youth.

BARRIER TWO - **Lack of Coordination**

Federal Mandate: "Gather data on the nature and extent of problems of access to and placement of these children in elementary and secondary schools and the difficulties in identifying the special needs of such children."

Nonregulatory Guidance, Title IV
Subtitle B, McKinney Homeless
Assistance Act

Objective One: To develop a model to improve communication and coordination between 40 local districts and social service or shelter providers and thereby ensure that educational services meet the needs of homeless children and youth.

- Establish an outreach contact person within each of the 40 LEAs.

    - Inform contacts of specific outcome of survey report regarding the number and location within their boundaries of homeless children and youth.

    - Inform contacts of general statewide report on homeless children and youth.

    - Suggest that contact persons (who may be school counselors, nurses, teachers, or administrators) serve in the following capacities:

        1. Serve as an advocate of homeless children in school.

2. Conduct outreach efforts to ensure homeless children are being placed in school.
3. Facilitate the admission of homeless children in local schools.
4. Facilitate the immediate assessment and testing of incoming homeless children and youth.
5. Coordinate with social service agencies to ensure that other needs of homeless children and youth are addressed.

- Distribute informational brochures on the number and location of homeless children and youth to social service agencies and local service providers (include 50 data sources from Final Report on Homeless Children and Youth in 1988, Table I).

- Establish and/or continue contact between State Office for Education of Homeless Children and Youth and local and state coordinating groups such as State Ad Hoc Committee, Salt Lake Coordinating Committee, Weber County Coordinating Committee.

  - Attend committee meetings and present information regarding number and location of homeless children and youth and problems relating to school attendance as well as material regarding circumstances of homelessness to raise awareness levels among agencies.

- In areas of the state where coordinating groups serving the homeless do not exist, encourage the formation of local networking groups. When contacting local Chapter I personnel or Migrant Education personnel, suggest contact of individuals from local shelters or advocacy groups serving the homeless. Identify school districts and service providers where local networking is occurring and suggest these as models for other areas.

- Establish a Client Advisory Board which includes parents of homeless or previously homeless children and youth. The advisory board will formulate recommendations to be presented to state and local social service agencies and work with the Logistics and Transportation Committee to facilitate school access for Homeless Children and Youth.

BARRIER THREE - **Lack of Continuity of Educational Programs**

Federal Mandate: "Each homeless child shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school . . . including educational services for which the child meets eligibility criteria, such as compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged and educational programs for the handicapped and for students with limited English proficiency; programs for vocational education; programs for gifted and talented; and school meal programs."

McKinney Act, Subtitle B, Section 722

Objective One: To link programs for homeless children, youth, and adults with already existing programs such as the Vocational Carl Perkins Act and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

Activities:

- Request local shelter providers refer eligible youth and adults to State Coordinator's Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth for Carl Perkins grants for vocational training or for training for disadvantaged and handicapped.

- Network with local shelters to refer homeless youth and adults to JTPA Programs, Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, Counselors, Lowell Bennion Center at the University of Utah, and other community resources.

Objective Two: To encourage local districts to provide a variety of educational services to meet the needs of homeless student populations while guaranteeing that homeless children and youth receive educational services comparable to those received by the general population.

Activities:

- Identify models which currently serve to meet the needs of homeless children and youth.

    - Assess strengths of models for possible replication.

    - Encourage local districts to guarantee all provisions of Stewart B. McKinney Act, i.e., special education, compensatory education, limited English, vocational education, gifted and talented programs.

- Encourage the use of volunteer or paid tutors to work in shelters or schools with homeless children and youth who have lost time in school.

- Through in-service training, encourage educators to do timely assessments of homeless children and youth in order to provide any additional services for which they may qualify.

- Encourage volunteer organizations or older students to establish outreach activities at local shelters. Maintain a listing of local shelters statewide and contact person at shelter. Establish a volunteer network to work with special needs of homeless children and youth utilizing the Utah State Office of Education roster. The network will include members of the Client Advisory Board, previously Homeless Children and Youth, and interested citizens.

- Monitor individual homeless students to determine whether students are receiving services guaranteed under Stewart B. McKinney Act.

- Meet with parents, teachers, administrators in local districts to gather information regarding availability of educational services.

BARRIER FOUR - Lack of Transportation

Federal Mandate: "Each homeless child shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected . . ."

McKinney Act, Subtitle B, Section 722

Objective One: To make every effort to maintain students in the original school or where the student is interested and willing to attend school in the new district of residence and encourage acceptable methods of transportation.

Activities:

- Encourage local shelters to provide transportation with vans or volunteer help.

- Provide special transportation through the local school district to those special education students eligible under their Individual Education Plan.

- Investigate the possibility of subsidizing transportation of homeless students to supplement school district efforts, e.g., Community Services Block Grant funds, Human Services Development funds, McKinney Act funds (other than Subtitle B, Section 722). Establish a Logistics and Transportation Committee to facilitate school access for Homeless Children and Youth. This committee will include members of the client Advisory Board, local district personnel, representatives from the Utah State Office of Education, and interested citizens.

BARRIER FIVE - Residency Requirements Federal Mandate

Federal Mandate: "In any state that has a residency requirement as a component of its compulsory school attendance laws, the state will review and under take steps to revise such laws . . . to the extent practicable, under requirements related to education established by state law, the local educational agencies of each homeless child or youth shall either (A) continue the child's or youth's education in the school district of origin for the remainder of the school year or, (B) enroll the child or youth in the school district where the child or youth is actually living; whichever is in the child's best interest or the youth's best interest). The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parent or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parent . . . each state shall . . . provide procedures for the resolution of disputes regarding the education placement of homeless children and youth."

McKinney Act, Subtitle B, Section 722

Objective One: To ensure school enrollment in the school district in which the child or youth is residing or continue attendance in the child's or youth's school of origin.

Applicable Law and Activities:

1. The Utah State Code allows the State Board of Education "to apply for, receive, administer and distribute to eligible applicants, funds made available through programs of the federal government." (53-1-402(3) U.C.A. 1953). In keeping with this provision, the Board can distribute federal money for special education programs and impose requirements on districts to receive the money.

2. Utah law also designates the school district of residence for a minor child as:

   a. the school district in which the parent or guardian who has legal custody of the child is domiciled;

   b. the school district in which the parent or guardian who has legal custody of the child, and with whom the child lives, resides; or

   c. the school district in which the child resides: (i) while in the custody or under the supervision of a Utah state agency; (ii) while under the supervision of a private or public agency authorized to provide child placement services by the state of Utah; (iii) while living with a responsible adult resident of the district if the district board of education has determined, in accordance with policies of the Utah State Board of Education, that the child's physical, mental, moral, or emotional health is best served by considering the child to be a resident for school purposes . . .(53-2-210(1) U.C.A. 1953).

3. Utah law also requires a person having control of a minor between 6 and 18 years of age to send the minor to a public or regularly established private school during the school year in the district in which the minor resides or be charged with a misdemeanor for willful non-compliance. (53A-11-101 U.C.A. 1953).

4. In summary, the State Board can receive federal money and establish rules for distributing it. Also, a minor child's school district of residence is where his parent or legal guardian is domiciled. "Domiciled" is defined as where the parent or legal guardian considers his permanent home to be and where he intends to return. Finally, the parent or legal guardian of a child must see that a minor child attends school or be in violation of the law.

   Traditionally, Utah school districts have been cooperative among themselves and with parents in allowing parents to have a child attend school outside the child's resident district, if the move accommodates the child's best interests.

By October 1, 1989, the Utah State Office of Education's approval, a rule that would further solidify this cooperation and would require that each homeless child shall either (1) continue to be educated in the school district the child attended before becoming homeless for the remainder of the school year or (2) be educated in the school district in which the homeless child is actually living, whichever is in the best interest of the child.

The "best interest of the child" determination shall be made as follows:

a. Local education agencies shall allow the parent, legal guardian, or the adult student to unilaterally determine that it is in the best interest of the student to attend the school district where the student is actually living. No further determinations are required if the student is to attend the school where he or she is actually living.

b. If the parent, legal guardian or the adult student contends that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school district in which the student is actually living, a determination that it is in the best interest of the child or youth to continue the student's education in the school district of origin for the remainder of the school year must be a joint decision of the parent, legal guardian or adult student, the school district of origin, and the school district in which the child temporarily resides. If there is consensus, the consensus decision shall represent the best interest of the student. No further determinations are required. However, if there is not consensus among all three parties, it shall be assumed that attendance in the school district in which the student temporarily resides is in the best interest of the student, unless one of the parties chooses to initiate the dispute resolution process.

c. If dispute resolution is required, each party must justify its contention and the issue will be resolved on a case-by-case basis by Dr. Kenneth L. Hennefer, Utah State Office of Education Specialist, Special Needs Population.

The following rule from the Utah Administrative code became effective on May 1, 1990.

R300-616-2 Authority and Purpose

A. This rule is authorized under Article X, Section 3 of the Utah State Constitution, Section 53A-1-401(3), U.C.A. 1953, relating to the authority of the USBE to adopt rules in accordance with its responsibilities, Section 53A-11-101 which requires that minors between the ages of 6 and 18 attend school during the school year in the district of residence, and by Section 53A-2-201(3) which makes each school district responsible for providing educational services for all children of school age who reside in the district.

B. The purpose of this rule is to ensure that homeless children have the opportunity to attend school with as little disruption as reasonably possible.

R300-616-3 Criteria for Determining Where a Homeless Child Shall Attend School

A. A homeless child may:

(1) continue for the remainder of the school year to attend the school which the child attended prior to becoming homeless, or
(2) transfer to the school district of attendance.

B. Determination of residence or domicile may include consideration of the following criteria:

(1) the place, however temporary, where the child actually sleeps;
(2) the place where an emancipated child or an unemancipated child's family keeps its belongings;
(3) the place which an emancipated child or an unemancipated child's parent considers to be home; or
(4) recommendations of the Utah State Department of Social Services

C. Determination of residence or domicile may not be based upon:

(1) rent or lease receipts for an apartment or home;
(2) the existence or absence of a permanent address; or
(3) a required length of residence in a given location.

D. If there is a dispute as to residence or the status of a child as an emancipated minor, the issue may be referred to the USOE Special Needs Population Specialist for resolution.

E. The purpose of Federal homeless education legislation is to ensure that a child's education is not needlessly disrupted because of homelessness. If a child's residence or eligibility is in question, the child shall be admitted to school until the issue is resolved.

Objective Two: To ensure school enrollment in the school district in which the child or youth is residing or continue attendance in the child's or youth's school of origin.

Activities:

- Conduct assessment and monitoring of individual cases to ensure compliance with Utah Compulsory Education Law.

BARRIER SIX - Student Records

Federal Mandate: "To the extent practicable, local educational agencies (shall assure that) the school records of each homeless child or youth shall be maintained - (A) so that records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school district; and (B) in a manner consistent with Section 438 of the General Education Provisions Act."

McKinney Act, Subtitle B, Section 722

Objective One: To eliminate delays in enrollment due to lack of student records and encourage timely forwarding of student records.

Activities:

- Monitor individual cases to determine whether homeless children and youth are able to register in local schools without delays due to lack of school records.

- Inform LEAs of intent of Stewart B. McKinney Act regarding the timely forwarding of student records and the importance of providing immediate educational services to homeless students even in cases where records are delayed or are unavailable.

SECTION IV

EVALUATION

In general, evaluation should be of a formative, ongoing nature with the Office of Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Youth being appraised by school districts, shelter, and social service providers of the problems involved in implementing the State Plan. Open lines of communication between these groups must be maintained. Specific evaluations should be made within the first year of Plan implementation and the following evaluation criteria is suggested.

BARRIER ONE - Awareness

Do the yearly survey reports indicate increased awareness by local district personnel of the presence of homeless children and youth within local districts?

BARRIER TWO - Coordination

Do local district contacts report facilitation of admission of homeless children and youth into schools?

BARRIER THREE - Continuity of Programs

Have model programs been planned or implemented which meet the needs of homeless children and youth?

Are homeless children and youth receiving educational services which are comparable to those received by other students?

Do homeless children and youth receive services guaranteed under the McKinney Act including compensatory education, education for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, vocational education, programs for gifted and talented and school meals programs?

BARRIER FOUR - Transportation

Do families of homeless children and youth continue to report lack of transportation as a reason for not attending school?

BARRIER FIVE - Residency Requirements

Does random monitoring show that homeless children and youth are being provided comparable educational service within district of residency or district of origin?

BARRIER SIX - Student Records

Does case monitoring show that homeless students are not being denied immediate educational services due to lack of student records?

SECTION V

Appendix A: Summary of Data from the Final Report 1987 - 1988

The Utah State Plan for Education of Homeless children and Youth is a product of data that was collected over a period of one year. For greater continuity, a summary of the report was included to enable the reader to understand the transition between the findings and the development of the first annual plan for educating children and youth.

Preliminary surveys were conducted to determine the numbers of homeless children and youth in Utah. Partial validations of this number were obtained through extensive interviews and a comprehensive point in time study. During the winter of 1988 and 1989, three Point In Time Surveys were conducted. On those days the average number of homeless children and youth in Utah appeared to be roughly 300 per day. These numbers are seasonal but these figures are considered conservative. One major obstacle in obtaining precise numbers was the varying interpretations of the term "homeless" by providers. Approximately 56 percent of the children were attending school. Several factors interacted to impede attendance. The most important of these were lack of acceptance in the regular schools, the school transportation system, and lack of trust on the part of parents. These problems could be alleviated at least in part by establishment of an outreach advocacy program and school officials educating teachers regarding needs of homeless children in transition.

A school within the shelter has had some success in Salt Lake City School District but has the drawback of separating children due to economic status and denying them programs available in regular schools. The regular school is available but the parents and children are experiencing some major successes with individualized instruction and closer supervision and fewer students. While there are advantages and disadvantages to this special program the findings recommend that schools provide an outreach and recognize the needs of homeless children. Schools need to mainstream homeless students with open entry and open exit programs. This could be accomplished with competency based education.

The initial round of surveys and documentations of the educational needs of homeless children and youth has provided a starting data base from which more specific programs can be promulgated. Additional survey data, however, are needed to accurately identify the precise numbers and locations of homeless children and youth. This will lead to developing the optimal approach to providing a quality education for this population at least commensurate with that available to the general student populations.

The initial questionnaire sent to nine Association of Governments, 14 local shelters, and 40 local school districts as well as on-site visits yielded new and informative data. These data, and particularly the personal interviews, provided a rich base of information concerning the educational needs of homeless children and youth. This section discusses this material in three major sections: The Issues Survey and Site Visitations, what was learned from them in terms of the barriers to education, and the current status of educational programs for homeless students.

Issues Survey and Site Visitations

The initial Issues Survey revealed that according to the Association of Governments Organizations receiving FEMA and McKinney Act money to serve the homeless there were reportedly 4,381 homeless children in Utah during 1987. Yet the survey of local school districts gave a count of 267. While this figure, 4,381, appears to include double counting it is still a matter of concern that local school districts recognize few homeless children on a yearly basis. It became apparent that the school district personnel were unaware of the presence of homeless students within their districts.

The Point In Time Survey conducted on December 14, showed 285 homeless children and youth on that day. Continued Point In Time Survey work will yield information which is anticipated to reflect seasonal trends in numbers of homeless children and youth in Utah. In addition to these Point In Time Surveys the yearly and monthly findings will be reported in January 1989 and will be forwarded as an addendum to this report. Education regarding the McKinney definition as to what constitutes homelessness is needed especially among school districts. For example, one district respondent said, "Our district has not to this point found any children who are "homeless". We have had children who live in tents in a campground facility; however, that facility is no longer in existence".

In another instance, when the researcher questioned officials using the term "transient" families, the response change. "Oh, of course we have transient families, but they are not homeless. They are just traveling from California to Colorado and their car breaks down", was a typical response. This general lack of awareness on the part of local school officials as to what constitutes homelessness points to a need for consistency of definitions.

The presence of transients in Utah communities as well as migrant workers has long been accepted. Fruit growers and other agricultural groups have historically depended on migrant workers and their children to harvest crops during summer and fall, and Larry Carillo, an Ogden School District Principal, stated that the problem with children working in the fields instead of attending school is probably worse now than it was in past years due to the slump in Utah's economy.

While most of these workers may find adequate housing the Utah Rural Development Agency maintains that hundreds of migrant children remain unhoused or inadequately housed (i.e., lacking heat, electricity, or running water) during the summer and fall. Jeannine Roederer, of St. Joseph's Outreach in Ogden, states that she is currently serving 95 homeless children, many of whom are migrants. She reports families doubled up in barns and shacks in rural areas around Ogden. Donna Arbab, Director of URDC, similarly reports families living in inadequate housing, unfit for humans, such as abandoned chicken coops.

In addition to migrant families, another group who are usually referred to as transient are reported by numerous agencies. During site visitation LDS Bishops, who were designated to serve transient populations in St. George and Cedar City, reported that they served an average of 25 to 30 transient families yearly. These families may be looking for work in Utah or may be in transit from one state to another. For example, an LDS Bishop in Cedar city provided work for a father of four children by hiring him to do odd jobs around his house. The family had been living in their car for several days prior to contacting him.

Further research of services offered by the LDS Church to the homeless or near homeless in other localities would undoubtedly swell the number of homeless families and children in Utah well beyond those reported.

A clergy member in St. George reports housing a family with eight children for a week in a local motel. The woman was pregnant and could not travel. He states that none of the children went to school during that time.

Churches throughout Utah report giving services (i.e., food, gas, money, and lodging) to families with children in transit. During a site visitation, Father Kuzi of the Catholic Church in St. George, reported helping about 50 families yearly, many of whom are Native Americans or Spanish speaking, and most of whom are in transit from one location to another. Tom Vaughn of Cedar City Social Services, reports that transient and homeless families in the area may refuse to accept welfare but only request help in finding a job. Another group included in the Issues Survey were families who became homeless as a result of abuse. Sharon Young of the YWCA in Salt Lake City, reports sheltering about 100 school age children yearly who stay at the YWCA to escape abuse. Broken bones and burns may bring women and their children to the shelters.

Barriers to Education of Homeless Children

The survey research revealed that a variety of factors affected school attendance among homeless children. Some of these factors were:

1. Losing the Children: Shelter providers and church groups report that fear of losing children is a frequent reason for not seeking social services and for not registering children in school. Families living in poverty circumstances are afraid that they will be deemed negligent when their children are sick or when food is not available. At the Salt Lake Family Shelter, women often expressed fear that if they couldn't get rid of head lice (which were usually present at the family shelter) that their children would be taken from them and placed in foster care. Jeannine Roederer of St. Joseph's Outreach also stated that this was the most frequent reason for families whom she served not reporting to social services or the local Head Start programs.

   This lack of trust appears to be pervasive among homeless families. If the problem of educating homeless and near homeless children is to be resolved this problem needs to be addressed.

2. Transportation: Among families who stay at shelters, a frequently cited reason for keeping children out of school, is the lack of transportation. Often shelter is provided in undesirable sections of town and may be a mile or more away from school. Occasionally school districts have attempted busing, but this has not been successful because of other factors.

   For families not living in shelters, transportation also is a problem. Utah Rural Development Center reports that several migrant families may travel in one vehicle which is used to transport workers to the fields and is, therefore, not available for transporting children to school.

3. Clothing and Hygiene: The lack of appropriate clothing and lack of items for personal hygiene such as shampoo often result in children feeling embarrassed when they attend school. Children may also be teased by their peers when they arrive at school in inappropriate clothing or clothing that has been salvaged from a donations bag and may not fit.

4. Medical Attention: Service groups providing medical help report that physical illness is a frequent reason for not attending school. Families living together in close quarters or living in dwellings without heat or running water become prey to increased infections. According to Allison Page, nurse practitioner at the Salt Lake City Family Shelter, strep throats may go untreated and children are constantly exposed to cold viruses, lice and occasionally even tuberculosis.

5. Food: Food also may be a problem in keeping children from school. The family shelter teacher in Salt Lake City reports seeing children who have not eaten any dinner the previous night or whose dinner consisted of day-old bread spread with cheese and served from the glove compartment of the car, since regulations prevented cooking in the shelter.

   Families living in these situations without food, proper clothing or access to washing facilities can hardly be expected to place a high priority on school attendance. Children who are unsure about where they may be sleeping at night cannot be expected to willingly take leave of their parents in the morning to attend school.

6. Rejection by the School Administration: Few cases of denial of education to children on the part of Utah schools were reported. Agencies reported that schools attempted to accommodate families and their children whenever possible. Also, Utah laws should not be a barrier to children receiving a free and appropriate public education. Sections 53-4-15 and 15-415.1 of the compulsory school attendance law provides that the school a minor child attends is determined by where the parent resides or is domiciled.

   Utah's 40 school districts, the Skillss Center, and post-secondary area vocational schools are prepared to serve the homeless without respect to residency.

   One elementary school principal who was interviewed in the Salt Lake District, and who reported a large turnover rate (40 percent), stated that no child would be turned away from the school due to residency requirements, lack of previous records, or even lack of immunization. She believed that would be true of the majority of elementary schools.

   However, at another central city school with an 85 percent turnover rate, the secretary stated that families might be sent back to the previous school to procure a withdrawal notice or other records if the previous school was within driving distance. She estimated that two or three families per year did not return after this initial visit. Whether the families became discouraged about the registration process, or whether they moved to another area, can only be surmised.

The state law requires evidence of immunization upon enrollment in school. We have no knowledge of a child being turned away; however, this could conceivably be used as grounds for turning away students who might be seen as undesirable (i.e., usually discipline problems). Immunizations are available at the County Health Department for a minimum fee and are given free of charge in some circumstances. Donna Arbab, URDC, says that even a nominal charge of three dollars may prevent some families from getting immunizations. To the researcher's knowledge, principals give ample time to get the immunizations and every effort is made to allow the student to enter school.

The situation in regards to high school attendance is somewhat different. School officials state that it is the school policy to refer high school students to the community school when they arrive between quarters. At the quarter break they accept new students. It appears that there are exceptions to this policy depending on individual circumstances.

Current Status of Educational Programs for Homeless Students

The Point In Time Survey of December 14 identified 56 percent of Utah's homeless children as attending school. The majority of those students attend on-site school programs. These programs include Youth Services Program, YWCA Programs, and on-site school at the Family Shelter in Salt Lake City.

The programs rely on local school districts to provide itinerant or homebound teachers to come to the facility to teach. For example, the Salt Lake Shelter School (Referred to in the Washington Post as the "No Name School") opened in 1984 as a result of a request from Travelers Aid to provide educational services to children staying at the Family Shelter. Before opening the on-site school, the district had unsuccessfully attempted busing students to an elementary school some two miles from the shelter. Currently the Shelter School has one teacher and one aide who arrive at the shelter each morning and meet any students who are staying at the shelter on that particular day. A separate area at the shelter is designated as the classroom. Students vary in age from five to eighteen and stay an average of six to eight weeks at the Shelter School. School is held four to five hours each day, and students are taught in a variety of subjects depending on needs and interest of the students. The advantages of this on-site school as reported by teachers are:

1. An attendance of roughly 90 percent is maintained by having the school in the shelter.

2. Sense of community and support is provided through contact and interaction with parents, students, and the teacher in a single facility.

3. Transportation problems are eliminated.

4. Children do not directly experience the problems of rejection and embarrassment from peers who are better off economically.

5. The instruction is more individualized.

6. Curriculum can be better adapted, rather than rigid book and grade level placement.

The disadvantages reported by the teacher are:

1. Children are separated from the regular school program due largely to their economic status. This becomes significant for children who spend extended amounts of time in shelters as they receive a very separate educational experience.

2. Children do not have access to programs such as handicapped service, Chapter 1, programs for gifted and talented, English as a Second Language, and vocational programs. Although children receive a school lunch, it is a cold lunch rather than a hot lunch, and they do not receive a school breakfast.

3. It is difficult in terms of preparation for one teacher to teach many grade levels adequately.

4. Teacher and students remain isolated from their peers.

The YWCA in Salt Lake City relies on visits from a teacher to tutor children at their shelter. Similarly, shelters for abused spouses in Ogden and Provo have expressed a desire to have homebound teachers make shelter visits and do individual or group tutoring of students.

The Utah State Office of Education has had extensive meetings with industry people, other agencies, and educators. Two proposals were approved to train homeless students in building construction. The grants were to train the homeless from the Wasatch Front South Shelter. The Salt Lake Community College and the Skills Center are providing the training along with supportive services at no cost to the students. Travelers Aid Society identified some of the students, the County Division of Job Training and Development identified others. The most successful students were referred by the elementary school teachers at the Salt Lake Shelter who referred the parents of the students they were teaching.

The ranks of the near homeless or those living substantially below the poverty level is enormous. Homebound teachers in Salt Lake City School District report providing services to many children who cannot attend school due to extended illnesses while at the same time are living in housing without electricity and/or heat.

The results of this research, indicate that school districts could address the problem of educating homeless and near homeless children by establishing local outreach advocates for homeless children within their district. Advocates would act as a liaison between the family and the school system and interact to solve problems that families face in school registration and attendance including the areas discussed earlier, such as lack of trust in the system, problems with transportation, food, clothing, and medical care.

However, outreach advocates for homeless students would need to rely on school personnel and classroom teachers to create an environment which is accepting and supportive of homeless children and youth as they attempt to enter or re-enter the mainstream. Attitudes toward poverty including stereotyping or discriminating in both subtle and overt ways need to be examined. Preliminary studies of levels of achievement of children at the Salt Lake Family Shelter School show the fallacy of stereotyping or generalizing in regard to homeless students. While many appear to be below grade level in mathematics and reading, a large number also report having been in programs for the gifted and talented. Although Ellen Bassuk's studies show a large number of homeless children are depressed or may be withdrawn or act out, teachers at the Shelter School report that many learn to cope with their uncertain and insecure lives in positive and creative ways. However, without intervention through educational programs, it is unlikely that very many of these children will be able to live lives where their creative abilities and intelligence can be manifest.

ABSTRACT

1989 REPORT ON HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN UTAH

Surveys were conducted throughout Utah to determine the number of homeless children and youth and the number of these individuals who were attending school. Validations of the numbers were obtained through extensive interviews and several point in time studies.

The numbers of homeless children and youth in the State were found to total 2,309. This is considerably less than the 1988 number largely for two reasons:

1. The 1988 count was determined before a reliable data base had been established, and

2. Statistical "outlier" counts were included in 1988 that were since considered to be unreliable. These numbers are considered to be conservative in large part because the "outlier" numbers were not included, many regional data bases included homeless numbers only from the larger cities, and there was no way of getting accurate counts on the number of doubled up families.

Based largely on the point in time studies, approximately 50 percent of these children attended school. However, the number varied greatly over the year, but on the whole was similar to the 1988 count. Factors impeding attendance were carefully considered. Lack of acceptance by peers was considered to be critical. A major means for alleviating this would be through establishing an outreach advocacy program with the school officials educating teachers and admission personnel regarding the needs of homeless children in transition.

The current data base and surveys have provided a basis for reasonably valid counts of homeless children and youth. However, these are still problems with consistent definitions of "homeless" and resolving some of the variables in the counts. Additional data, based on interviews and clarifications of terms with providers are needed to more accurately identify the precise numbers and locations of homeless children and youth. This will make it possible to develop the optimal approach to providing a quality education for this population, commensurate with the general student population.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Current 1989 data on number and location of homeless children and youth were obtained throughout Utah. Data was based on interviews with providers of services in regions represented by the larger cities as well as rural areas. Availability and accessibility of educational services to homeless children were determined.

Much of the data regarding total counts was developed from point in time studies designed to maintain ongoing data regarding the status of educational needs of the homeless student population.

Detailed background data was provided in the 1987-88 final report and will not be reiterated here.

RESULTS

V. Indicate the reasons the homeless children and youth are not attending school in your State, and provide the basis for these conclusions.

Reasons given for not attending school include the following:

1. Homeless families without shelter, food, and other basic necessities may have difficulty focusing on school attendance issues.
2. Many homeless families may lack a means of transportation to get their children to school.
3. Because of the transient circumstances of many families, they may lack knowledge of the location, hours, enrollment requirements, etc., of the school within their new geographic area.
4. Physical illness is relatively high among families living in shelters or cars as compared to other populations. This affects school attendance.
5. Homeless students are not always welcomed by local school personnel, teachers, and other students.
6. Homeless parents may distrust the system and fear losing children if school officials find the parents are unable to provide their children with basic necessities of food, shelter, etc.

These conclusions are drawn from interviews with homeless students and parents, school personnel, and on-site observations.

VIa. List, in order of importance, the special educational needs of the homeless children and youth.

1. Acceptance and welcome by school personnel, teachers, and peers.
2. Information regarding curricula, textbook needs, etc.
3. Parents must be informed of the programs available and how to access them.
4. Transportation must be available.
5. Fees must be waived where necessary for programs, immunizations, etc. Information regarding these waivers needs to be readily accessible.
6. Convenient day care for homeless teenage parents trying to continue their education needs to be provided.
7. Homeless high school students need to receive credit for partially completed course work.

VIb. Difficulties in identifying needs.

1. The need to accommodate the homeless sector of the student population remains a problem in the school districts. Personnel may make it difficult for such students to be registered to the extent of discouraging their registration.
2. An attitude exists that homeless children shouldn't attend regular school and that special shelter schools adequately meet their needs.
3. The need exists to clarify the definition of homeless among school officials and service agencies.

DISCUSSION

Numbers obtained of homeless children and youth in the state are as valid as possible under the circumstances. But the circumstances or conditions of the data base need to be explained and qualified. The major variable lies among the many providers. All have very limited time available to obtain accurate data.

The lack of accuracy by providers can be serious and account for some of the outlier numbers that were not included in the counts. These may have been partially valid, however, thus contributing to an overall conservative count.

In another instance, in Cedar City, the individual keeping the records at the local shelter left the area late in the year taking his records with him. Thus, the counts represent only a small part of the year.

Another problem lies with accounting for the transient population. Many of the children, notably in Wendover and Richfield, live out of cars and are in transit between states. Many more in this category are simply missed completely so that their numbers are not included in the count.

Another problem lies in coordinating the way in which the many diverse agencies or providers maintain their records. We have, of course, provided uniform forms and instructions but because of the different backgrounds and objectives of the providers, it is difficult to develop a standardized data base. The amount of money available to the agencies probably plays a role in this. The presence of a large volunteer sector and a high turnover rate among employees are also major problems in data development.